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THE MORE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS.

BY- CHANNON, GLORIA

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MORE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS, A NEW YORK CITY SPECIAL SCHOOL PROGRAM, IS CRITICALLY EVALUATED HERE. THE PROGRAM, INITIATED BY THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS (UFT), AND DEVELOPED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, THE COUNCIL OF SUPERVISORY ASSOCIATIONS, AND THE UFT, EMPHASIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF A GUIDANCE APPROACH IN TEACHING GHETTO CHILDREN. THE CLASSES IN THE 21 PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS HAVE A MAXIMUM SIZE OF 22 STUDENTS, AND THE PROGRAM OFFERS SUPPLEMENTARY HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES, "CLUSTER" CLASS ARRANGEMENTS, AND HETEROGENEOUS GROUPING. IT IS FELT THAT THE PROGRAM HAS BEEN A TREMENDOUS FAILURE. THIS CRITICISM IS BASED ON FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE, FROM WHICH THE ROLES OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE TEACHERS WERE ANALYZED. THE ADMINISTRATION WAS FOUND TO BE RIGID, RESTRICTIVE, AND UNIMAGINATIVE, AND THE TEACHERS INEXPERIENCED, IN CONFLICT WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND OFTEN HOSTILE TO THE CHILDREN. CRITICIZED TOO IS THE EMASCULATION OF SOME OF THE BEST FEATURES OF THE INITIAL PLAN BECAUSE OF A LACK OF MONEY AND INSPIRING PRINCIPALS. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN "THE URBAN REVIEW," VOLUME 2, FEBRUARY 1967. (NH)

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The More Effective Schools

by Gloria Channon

On the battleground of New York City's public school education, it is sometimes hard to discern who is the enemy and for what goals the combatants are fighting. Everyone asserts that he seeks only the education of the child. But the child, like the helpless civilian in any war, seems to be the casualty, while armies proliferate and battles are won and lost on paper.

There are four major armed camps on the scene: the Board of Education, the United Federation of Teachers, the civil rights groups, and the fearful white community. On the sidelines, often changing their tunes to suit the occasion, are the real professionals; some of them at lower levels of the board hierarchy, some the university-based researchers and educators.

A current battle is being waged over the city's More Effective Schools program. Twenty thousand children attend the 21 schools in the program. The main differences between them and other elementary schools are: class registers with a maximum of 22, extensive guidance services; four teachers for each group or "cluster" of three classes; heterogeneous grouping of the children; additional health and community services.

The board, in spite of its own highly favorable evaluation, appears unwilling to expand the program. The civil rights groups are suspicious of it, as they are of any token program set forth by the board. The union, whose top leaders are increasingly concerned over the public's view of the union as just another greedy, welfare-minded labor outfit, has issued the battle cry: "Expansion or Death!" The white community is for the moment quiescent, torn between the high cost of financing the MES (over $200 annually more per child, plus untold future costs in capital outlay for buildings) and the seemingly pleasant solution of the problem of quality education without integration.

The teachers, and I am one, are like infantry anywhere, a mixed lot who do their jobs, love to gripe, and cannot, in a profound sense, afford to be any more objective than an infantryman in battle.

The Union and the More Effective Schools

MES is, as the UFT takes every occasion to point out, the brainchild of the union. In the spring of 1964, Superintendent Calvin E. Gross, under fire from civil rights groups for inaction, was unable to move his subordinates in the radical directions he favored: paired schools and educational parks. In desperation, he grasped at a straw held out by the union – their recommendations for "Effective Schools in Urban Areas." (The "More" was inserted later. The board worships the word far more than the reality, and it felt that "More" was a semantic necessity. Else, who knows, the public might think that other schools are ineffective.)

The committee appointed by the board, consisting of representatives of the board, the Council of Supervisory Associations, and the United Federation of Teachers, followed the union's proposals in most details.

The parent committee at the union had included Si Beagle, now an Assistant Principal at MES 83 in Manhattan and head of the National Council for Effective Schools, Louis Hay, long associated with the Junior Guidance program for emotionally disturbed children, and two principals from the Harlem area, Elliott Shapiro and Edward Gottlieb, both "guidance-minded" and strongly committed to school participation in the community. All four men share a benevolently fanatic faith in the educability of the ghetto child, as well as a scepticism regarding the competence of the Board of E have something of the fanatic's blind devotion to his own and an uneasy distrust of those who question that truth.

Their solutions, of course, were determined largely problem. They did not, for example, question the cu parently felt that since the curriculum worked, or seeme schools, one need only create an administrative atmosph surface problems of the ghetto school were solved. In th ment, they contended, education as we know it in Forest would flourish.

To create this environment there is a heavy reliance call a guidance approach to education. For example, sl course, far behind national norms in reading. Louis Ha retardation is only one of the symptoms of the emotion However, a good case may be made for the reverse: that ance," in school terms, is a symptom of the educationall ing child. But when the problem is seen in psychiatric is sought psychiatrically. Thus, of the teaching specialis these schools in the "Report to the Superintendent" ou six and three-quarters are guidance counselors, psychol and psychiatric consultants. Only one is a corrective readi only in initial stages", although some principals have as reading teachers to their staffs. But apart from this practical deployment of faculty resources, another effect of the g again to remove responsibility for failure from the scho the individual and beyond him the family and the com atmosphere where failure is the norm and is socially a the staff, if not to the children.

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Their solutions, of course, were determined largely by their view of the problem. They did not, for example, question the curriculum. They apparently felt that since the curriculum worked, or seemed to, in middle-class schools, one need only create an administrative atmosphere where the worst surface problems of the ghetto school were solved. In this protected environment, they contended, education as we know it in Forest Hills and Riverdale would flourish.

To create this environment there is a heavy reliance on what I can only call a guidance approach to education. For example, slum children are, of course, far behind national norms in reading. Louis Hay feels that reading retardation is only one of the symptoms of the emotionally disturbed child. However, a good case may be made for the reverse: that "emotional disturbance," in school terms, is a symptom of the educationally retarded and failing child. But when the problem is seen in psychiatric terms, the solution is sought psychiatrically. Thus, of the teaching specialists recommended for these schools in the "Report to the Superintendent" outlining the program, six and three-quarters are guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers and psychiatric consultants. Only one is a corrective reading teacher, "required only in initial stages", although some principals have assigned two full-time reading teachers to their staffs. But apart from this practical matter of the skewed deployment of faculty resources, another effect of the guidance approach is again to remove responsibility for failure from the school and to place it on the individual and beyond him the family and the community. It creates an atmosphere where failure is the norm and is socially acceptable, at least to the staff, if not to the children.

The school's guidance team is often a sensitive and isolated group, with good reason. Most classroom teachers feel that guidance counselors have copped out of the classroom where the pressures were too much for them, and that the guidance services are of a seductive and ephemerally supportive kind: they pacify the disturbing child without really helping him to adjust to and accept classroom realities.

The guidance orientation does not, incidentally, extend to the staff, whose problems with each other as well as with children we will turn to later.

From the guidance point of view, heterogeneity was mandatory. The architects of the program were aware of the disastrous effects, emotionally and educationally, of sorting out children into a "class" structure of the elite and the inferior, identified by their reading ability. Heterogeneous grouping, regardless of ability or of achievement, was seen as the only solution. That the teacher, facing a class of sixth graders whose reading performance ranged from preprimer to high school level, would need special training and equipment even to begin to cope with her class, apparently did not occur to them. Heterogenity was interpreted with a classical simplicity. In a number of schools the children were listed according to reading ability and sorted out with blind justice: one "bright child" each, two "above average," and so forth, until all were distributed equally. In at least one instance, heterogeneity was left to chance, and was achieved by shuffling all the cards of children on a grade and dealing them out like so many poker hands, with a brief visual check to see that a proper color mixture existed. As a result, many problems arose. Unfortunately, solutions were sought by returning to homogeneity in a fractured and fragmented form. Reading, for example, must be taught homogeneously, it is thought, so the children must be re-grouped for reading, and, if there is time, re-grouping should also take place for other skills, such as math. Children who are not reading at all in the upper grades have to be taken out for special help. Bright children need extra intellectual stimulation and must be removed from the classroom to get it. But the "cluster" teacher, who was to have worked with the classroom teacher in the classroom precisely as a help in individualizing instruction, was found in practice to have perhaps three or four periods of time during the entire week that she could devote to shared teaching. The classroom teachers cried for help and were too often turned away with platitudes about "No class is ever homogeneous."

For many of us, however, heterogeneity, in spite of the way it has been implemented in our schools, is of great value. The problems exist, but there are some solutions, including intensive teaching for the most retarded to get them up to functional minimum levels of performance; or training teachers not to rely so heavily on the textbooks for their classroom instruction; or reviewing

the concept of the cluster teacher so that individual attention can be given children within the classroom.

But again, the union, anxious to expand the program, does not wish to see changes made in its most basic assumptions and proposals. Perhaps it is too late for a disclaimer, but I do not wish to imply that there is only cynicism and self-serving in the union's support of the program. President Al Shanker can toss off other promising proposals such as pairing and educational parks as "mere slogans," but many of the union's leaders are strong believers in the More Effective Schools approach: it must work, it will work! That the results, as measured by the reading tests, have been below their expectations, has been genuinely and profoundly shocking to them.

In an attempt to find some answers, the union held a conference at Arden House in November, 1966. A little more than a quarter of those attending were classroom teachers. The others were supervisors, guidance people, guests from the universities or from out-of-state, and a dozen or so spouses. Time was short and the vision narrow. There was an airing of problems; some proposals of a patchwork kind were made; supervisors were damned; but the structure remained intact. In fact, Si Beagle spelled out the terms of our work: the original proposals have not been carefully followed; we must see what problems there are and insist that the original plan be followed in every school. And it was Beagle who coined the slogan: "Expansion or Death!"

The Administration and the More Effective Schools

It is interesting to note that in three areas the Superintendent's Committee for More Effective Schools went far beyond the union's original proposals. One area was that of special programs and procedures such as an extended school day, weekend use of the school's facilities by the community, and special summer programs. But for want of funds, the ideas were not implemented. After-school study centers and a summer reading program do, of course, exist in many schools, but they are largely the same old tutorials, with an emphasis on voluntary participation and maximum attendance.

A second area was that of research and experimentation. The Committee proposed, "careful evaluation of the program as a whole from the very initiation of the project," as well as specific areas for active research and experimentation. Again, from lack of funds and lack of enthusiastic support in the participating schools, the ideas were not put to work.

A third area was in community relations. Included here was the goal of "total integration," as well as a number of proposals for the school to work with the community. Except for the appointment of a community coordinator in each school, there has been little movement in the direction of integrating the school with the community in which it functions. But here, lack of funds at the top of the bureaucracy is not the reason; it is rather a lack of commitment or interest at the bottom where it counts, among the supervisors and the teachers themselves. And this is true despite the fact that "community participation" has become the most salient problem facing the ghetto schools.

As everyone familiar with school administration knows very well, the principal is the linch pin of the system, certainly as far as teachers and children are concerned. The MES program has not changed this. The principal still sets the tone for his school. Within the restricted limits of who is available, he selects his staff; he determines the use of the specialists on the staff; he establishes the standards. In my first year in a More Effective School I saw the principal twice in the classroom. Once she stopped by to praise a clever bulletin board I had done in the hall; the second time was strictly from an old Bing Crosby God-is-not-dead movie, when I happened to be discussing the medieval church with a sixth-grade class just as she happened to be walking by with a covey of nuns who were visiting the school. She was a tidy administrator who could delegate authority, compartmentalize staff and children and guidance and community neatly, who had a very high regard for appearances, who did not trust her staff except in the hopeful, resigned way of mothers with young children, and for whom the process of education did not exist as an intellectual problem but only as a product to be sold by p tive thinking.

Perhaps this principal is not typical of principals of More But she shares with many in the administration of the city s ing, non questioning frame of mind: "this is what we have is what we will use." Indeed, New York's public schools, f all the way to the bottom, are a vast mass of unused power: assistant superintendents to insist on what their districts m through the principals who settle for glorified clerkdom, thr who behave like mice with un-belled cats, to the children who most of them, to use their parents' powers to save them. Thus essential aspects of the More Effective Schools program hav the flexibility, the democracy of staff participation, the fr from the curriculum in new ways, the research and evaluatio interaction with the community. The fault is not with the pa with the people.

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This drive for discipline is as obsessive in More Effective S others. Here too one hears early childhood teachers complain teach them in prekindergarten and kindergarten? They have still or stand in line!" One of the most widely held, if not unsh tions of educators everywhere is that education can only tak rooms, in silence. Somehow it is always supposed that if child other during the course of a lesson they cannot possibly be t lesson. Frequently, this demand for silence is enforced outsi as well. Our district superintendent on his first visit to our to be gesturing with imperious disapproval at the shocking dren talking to each other as they moved from one classroom his visit there was a strong effort, still not totally successful on trying), to teach the children to walk in silence through the behavior beyond talking and, I must add, gum chewing, is ge evidence of emotional disturbance so deep as to require ps guidance, services on the spot.

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The ubiquity of the SRA kits points up another dimension decisions made by the administrators of the More Effective S ditional funds available for supplies and books have been more textbooks, especially in the new schools such as mine our school we are starved for books for a classroom library, wh since the public libraries in our neighborhood rarely reach

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Perhaps this principal is not typical of principals of More Effective Schools. But she shares with many in the administration of the city schools a conforming, non questioning frame of mind: "this is what we have been given; this is what we will use." Indeed, New York's public schools, from near the top all the way to the bottom, are a vast mass of unused power: from the power of assistant superintendents to insist on what their districts must have and do, through the principals who settle for glorified clerkdom, through the teachers who behave like mice with un-belled cats, to the children who have not learned, most of them, to use their parents' powers to save them. Thus some of the most essential aspects of the More Effective Schools program have not been used: the flexibility, the democracy of staff participation, the freedom to depart from the curriculum in new ways, the research and evaluation process and the interaction with the community. The fault is not with the paper program, but with the people.

Again, the statement of the problem determines the directions in which solutions will be sought. The problem, in the eyes of the board, lies not with what we are doing, but with the "educational, physical, social and recreational deficits" of the children. Therefore, the need is not for compensation to overcome the failures of the schools but for compensatory education for the failures of the community. We are shocked, to take a recent example, when many Head Start children are shown to have lost all the gains they made. We question the Head Start program or the irreparable flaws in the child. We do not question the crushing tedium and the punishing restraint and formality of the classrooms of grades K-12.

This drive for discipline is as obsessive in More Effective Schools as it is in others. Here too one hears early childhood teachers complain: "What did they teach them in prekindergarten and kindergarten? They haven't learned to sit still or stand in line!" One of the most widely held, if not unshakeable assumptions of educators everywhere is that education can only take place in quiet rooms, in silence. Somehow it is always supposed that if children talk to each other during the course of a lesson they cannot possibly be talking about the lesson. Frequently, this demand for silence is enforced outside the classroom as well. Our district superintendent on his first visit to our school was seen to be gesturing with imperious disapproval at the shocking spectacle of children talking to each other as they moved from one classroom to another. After his visit there was a strong effort, still not totally successful (but we will go on trying), to teach the children to walk in silence through the halls. Any misbehavior beyond talking and, I must add, gum chewing, is generally felt to be evidence of emotional disturbance so deep as to require psychological, i.e., guidance, services on the spot.

Another crippling assumption of the schools is that reading is a subject to be taught within discrete and self-isolating boundaries, such as multiplication or chinning, and that it has no relationship to the spoken language. Mrs. O'Daly, assistant superintendent in charge of the More Effective Schools, recognizing that reading retardation was *the* problem to overcome, instructed the schools that reading must be taught by using the basal readers. The SRA kits, where children work at their own pace, correcting their own work and keeping their own records, have also been widely used. People who would be horrified if you justified arts and crafts on the grounds that children enjoyed doing them and were quiet when so occupied will use those grounds to support the continued use of SRA, although more silent, mechanical, superficial busywork is the last thing our children need.

The ubiquity of the SRA kits points up another dimension of the allocation decisions made by the administrators of the More Effective Schools. The additional funds available for supplies and books have been spent largely for more textbooks, especially in the new schools such as mine. As a result, in our school we are starved for books for a classroom library, which is important since the public libraries in our neighborhood rarely reach the kind of cir-

culation that will raise their book-buying income to the level needed by a single school of hungry readers. Moreover, our school library shelves are nearly bare. Library books purchased with federal funds have arrived, but are locked up in a closet, waiting for some last bureaucratic blessing before they can be shelved and put in circulation. Clearly, in this school at least, the proposals in the plan for more efficient ordering of supplies have not been effective. A teacher considering the needs of a particular group who asks for specific books and materials for these children, is faced with the regular procedure: she may ask for the materials to be ordered, but the order will not be filed until spring, and will be filled, if the school is lucky, sometime in the following school year. The procedure is the usual one for city schools; but the More Effective Schools were supposed to be an exception!

Supervisors below the principal work closely with the classroom teachers. But often their time is spent in settling quarrels among the teachers and in coping with discipline problems. One assistant principal complained that teachers were sending him chronic gum-chewers to deal with! In our school some of the assistant principals will teach children frequently: in demonstration lessons, or helping out when the substitutes cannot cover all classes, or as a matter of principle, for administrators often forget the climate of the classroom. They know their teachers far better than do most supervisors, and certainly they know the children better.

But the knowledge is of limited use. Even with the "no-prejudice" transfer-clause, which permits either a teacher or a principal to request that a teacher leave, it appears to be very difficult to get rid of any but the most disturbed or ineffective teachers on the staff. After all, to ask a teacher to leave is to take a decisive stand which may be open to question and argument and resistance, and few principals seem to have the energy to spare for emotional battle.

Again and again the fault seems to lie not so much with the machinery as with the people using it, or afraid of using it, or ignorant of the ways in which it can be used. Solutions are sought in administrative terms. Gimmicks, such as over-head projectors, become the substitutes for genuine change of curriculum content. And in a showdown, the conforming unquestioning acceptance of the board's definitions of the problem, of the curriculum, and of the methods, prevails.

The showdown, for the More Effective Schools, is the city-wide reading achievement test. There is widespread belief that this is the yardstick by which we will be measured, and that the fate of the More Effective Schools' program lies in the statistical lap of the test results. The already narrow view of the curriculum, which imposes the basal reader sight-vocabulary approach on all, is narrowed still further. Reading is taught in the peculiarly sterile guise of "test-taking skills." For innocent children, reading must then become a strange and restricted process in which one reads a dozen sentences and then answers questions about them. We have added one more negative to all the reasons they already may have for not learning to read.

But the scores hang over us. If we teach children in smaller groups; if we give them SRA; if we teach them how to take tests: why do they not then learn?

It is the great irony of the whole process that the children we have served best in the program—the children three or four years or more behind in reading—cannot perform on the tests in such a way as to reflect that progress. If you give a nonreader a pencil and a test sheet, he will proceed to mark every answer, and by chance he will score the minimum on the test. If, a year later, you test him again, and he answers what he can, plus a few guesses, he will again score close to the minimum. But what appears to be a gain or even a loss of a few months on the reading test score is really a difference in performance of from one to three years. But the numbers are objective and implacable judges, and we will be judged by them. And because of that impending judgment, we tell ourselves that we dare not take chances. We point to the fine results in the first and second grades, where failure has not yet had a chance to chain the children; we turn away from the upper grades. ("I'm not so concerned with the fifth and sixth grades," a princ
gone in a year or two. But the children coming up...")

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The Teachers and the More Effective Schools

When I expressed surprise once that the More Effective S flooded with applications from teachers in other ghetto s cher who had served over 30 years in Harlem schools know is better than the devil you don't"—the devil being

As a result, many members of the staff are young, new What they lack in experience they make up in enthusias at best though, the exchange is not an equivalent one, for learn "on the backs of their children," as another old-tim setting of the More Effective Schools, and with enough he they may survive long enough to enrich the children wit

Teaching in a More Effective School involves a constant ing assistant principals, to cluster teachers who share your c ists on the staff, to visitors from all over the world who fl the halls and classrooms. There is a strange social attitu determines that guests should not interrupt the classroom speak to the teachers or the children, only to each other. T how to be that of Sunday strollers viewing the caged anim

But the exposure to visitors is nothing compared w other teachers. For many of the people who have becom fession is one practiced in secret, behind closed doors closed bits of information served out at lunch time. To to the personalities and biases of our peers becomes, for from which we do not recover easily. Because the cluste never carefully defined, and because her functions as de fulfilled—there is simply not enough time for her to classes for a free period daily for the teachers, and help periods—her's has become an abrasive, frustrating job. among children and of conflict among teachers are wid cause of a happy choice in members of the cluster team it has justified all the preconceptions. But in most instan not worked well.

To some extent the problems could have been minimiz tion and instruction of the teachers in the possibilities concept of 66 children with four teachers has been replac and unworkable view of three classes of 22 with a four Whether the cluster teacher will survive as a genuine tea istrative device will depend largely on the extent to wh ministrators free themselves from the often self-impo narrow reading of the original plan, and forge new rel scope of the plan. How free will we be to play with the let the numbers bind and restrict us? Within a cluster, c

that will raise their book-buying income to the level needed by a ool of hungry readers. Moreover, our school library shelves are nearly ary books purchased with federal funds have arrived, but are locked oset, waiting for some last bureaucratic blessing before they can be nd put in circulation. Clearly, in this school at least, the proposals n for more efficient ordering of supplies have not been effective. considering the needs of a particular group who asks for specific materials for these children, is faced with the regular procedure: sk for the materials to be ordered, but the order will not be filed g, and will be filled, if the school is lucky, sometime in the following r. The procedure is the usual one for city schools; but the More Schools were supposed to be an exception!

sors below the principal work closely with the classroom teachers. their time is spent in settling quarrels among the teachers and in th discipline problems. One assistant principal complained that ere sending him chronic gum-chewers to deal with! In our school e assistant principals will teach children frequently: in demonstra-ns, or helping out when the substitutes cannot cover all classes, or r of principle, for administrators often forget the climate of the They know their teachers far better than do most supervisors, and they know the children better.

knowledge is of limited use. Even with the "no-prejudice" transfer-ich permits either a teacher or a principal to request that a teacher ppears to be very difficult to get rid of any but the most disturbed or teachers on the staff. After all, to ask a teacher to leave is to take stand which may be open to question and argument and resistance, rincipals seem to have the energy to spare for emotional battle.

nd again the fault seems to lie not so much with the machinery e people using it, or afraid of using it, or ignorant of the ways in n be used. Solutions are sought in administrative terms. Gimmicks, er-head projectors, become the substitutes for genuine change of n content. And in a showdown, the conforming unquestioning ac-f the board's definitions of the problem, of the curriculum, and of ds, prevails.

owdown, for the More Effective Schools, is the city-wide reading ent test. There is widespread belief that this is the yardstick by which measured, and that the fate of the More Effective Schools' program e statistical lap of the test results. The already narrow view of the m, which imposes the basal reader sight-vocabulary approach on rowed still further. Reading is taught in the peculiarly sterile guise king skills." For innocent children, reading must then become nd restricted process in which one reads a dozen sentences and then uestions about them. We have added one more negative to all the ey already may have for not learning to read.

scores hang over us. If we teach children in smaller groups; if we SRA; if we teach them how to take tests: why do they not then learn? great irony of the whole process that the children we have served e program — the children three or four years or more behind in cannot perform on the tests in such a way as to reflect that progress. e a nonreader a pencil and a test sheet, he will proceed to mark wer, and by chance he will score the minimum on the test. If, a year test him again, and he answers what he can, plus a few guesses, he score close to the minimum. But what appears to be a gain or even few months on the reading test score is really a difference in per-of from one to three years. But the numbers are objective and im-udges, and we will be judged by them. And because of that im-udgment, we tell ourselves that we dare not take chances. We point results in the first and second grades, where failure has not yet had o chain the children; we turn away from the upper grades. ("I'm not so concerned with the fifth and sixth grades," a principal said. "They'll be gone in a year or two. But the children coming up...")

One of the factors involved in the good performance in the lowest grades must be the driving impatience of Hortense Jones, Director of Early Childhood Education in the MES, who plays with numbers, manipulates registers and programs and personnel, and who seems not to have heard that failure is a psychological problem rather than an educational one. Teachers may cringe somewhat under her benevolent whip but they can take pride in the results.

What self-evaluation has taken place has been statistical. Among supervisors there is a reluctance to go beyond the despair of test results and such hope as is held out by the achievement of the lowest grades, to examine the factors involved: the strange and difficult mixture of persons, attitudes, recklessness or conformity, class size and content. While the lower grades gradually gain confidence and faith, the upper grades sink deeper in the quicksand, paralyzed in their postures of fear and failure.

The Teachers and the More Effective Schools

When I expressed surprise once that the More Effective Schools had not been flooded with applications from teachers in other ghetto schools, an older teacher who had served over 30 years in Harlem schools said, "The devil you know is better than the devil you don't" — the devil being the principal.

As a result, many members of the staff are young, newly-licensed teachers. What they lack in experience they make up in enthusiasm and energy. Even at best though, the exchange is not an equivalent one, for these young people learn "on the backs of their children," as another old-timer put it. But in the setting of the More Effective Schools, and with enough help from supervisors, they may survive long enough to enrich the children with whom they work.

Teaching in a More Effective School involves a constant exposure to wandering assistant principals, to cluster teachers who share your class, to other specialists on the staff, to visitors from all over the world who flow like lava through the halls and classrooms. There is a strange social attitude prevailing which determines that guests should not interrupt the classroom work; guests never speak to the teachers or the children, only to each other. The effect seems somehow to be that of Sunday strollers viewing the caged animals at the zoo.

But the exposure to visitors is nothing compared with the exposure to other teachers. For many of the people who have become teachers, the profession is one practiced in secret, behind closed doors, with carefully disclosed bits of information served out at lunch time. To be suddenly exposed to the personalities and biases of our peers becomes, for some of us, a trauma from which we do not recover easily. Because the cluster teacher's role was never carefully defined, and because her functions as described could not be fulfilled — there is simply not enough time for her to do more than cover classes for a free period daily for the teachers, and help with the two reading periods — her's has become an abrasive, frustrating job. Problems of discipline among children and of conflict among teachers are widespread. Where, because of a happy choice in members of the cluster team, it has worked well, it has justified all the preconceptions. But in most instances I know of it has not worked well.

To some extent the problems could have been minimized by longer orientation and instruction of the teachers in the possibilities of the program. The concept of 66 children with four teachers has been replaced by the more rigid and unworkable view of three classes of 22 with a fourth teacher available. Whether the cluster teacher will survive as a genuine teacher or as an administrative device will depend largely on the extent to which teachers and administrators free themselves from the often self-imposed limitations and narrow reading of the original plan, and forge new relationships within the scope of the plan. How free will we be to play with the numbers? Or will we let the numbers bind and restrict us? Within a cluster, can we group the chil-

dren so that there will be 30 in one group and 10 in another, if that will best serve the needs of the children? The answer at present seems to be "No": the book has predicated a maximum size of 22, and we must get along with that quantity.

Conflicts among the staff exist and always will, even in the best of institutions. But the conflict between teacher and child can destroy the child – if it makes education and its fruits unattainable. One of the sources of conflict, more fundamental than the clash of class values, is the clash of emotional styles.

In this country, being "educated" means having learned to use words to convey, to control, and often to deny emotions. When confronted as a small child by the conflicting evidence of words and of emotions, one learned to choose the words and to ignore or suppress the emotions. In the process words are often invested with emotional meanings they do not, in themselves, possess, as witness the hysteria aroused by the term "black power."

In the classroom, the teacher who has been educated in this way can empathize with verbally-oriented, "emotionally controlled" children, and they can understand her. But often the ghetto child has not learned to value words above feelings as the primary level of communication. He can be almost alarmingly sensitive to our feelings and moods, sometimes reading us far better than we can read ourselves. When our feelings contradict our words, he judges us, and if we are lucky, instead of fighting us, he will tune out our words – as we, tragically, tune out his feelings.

We cannot recognize love when it is tendered in any but middle-class coin. A young Negro teacher in our school was showing us a letter she had received from a child she did not know:

Dear Mrs. Shipley:

I like you very much. I think you are the prettiest teacher in the school...[and the much-erased and rewritten poignant last line] *I also am a Negro.*

A young teacher's first reaction: "You must show this to guidance. The child is sick." When others protested that it was a beautiful and moving letter, she backed down:

"I only meant she's on guidance. It would give the guidance counselor a new insight, All they ever hear are bad things."

It does not serve us to teach us all the ways the children *differ* from us if we do not know ourselves. Then all the well-intentioned courses in the world on the language deprivation, learning styles, economic status, cultural variations of these children will only serve to reinforce us in our view of ourselves as superior models, and make bearable and plausible our failures.

It is too optimistic to rely on staff selection to resolve the conflict as there are not enough teachers to choose from. But one of the proposals made at the Arden House conference is worth considering seriously: the proposal that teachers be given Sensitivity Training before assignment to the schools. Some of the conference time at schools could well be used to explore honestly our feelings and attitudes.

And the children... Whatever the family and the street have taught the child about himself and his world, it is we in the schools in those years before the sixth grade who have taught the child most efficiently and brutally that here, in this place, he cannot succeed.

Zenaida, who had moved back and forth between the Spanish-speaking schools of Puerto Rico and the schools of East Harlem, refused to work at all one day in her small reading group. "What's the use? My teacher said we'll have to be reading sixth-grade to go to the sixth grade. I'm reading second-grade now. I'll never make it."

Yolanda, 13 in the sixth grade, learned through the grapevine (the children's most effective grapevine, which crosses school districts) that she had been assigned to 7-17, out of 21 seventh-grade classes in the junior high she would enter. She was ecstatic: "I won't be in the dumb class!" To one who had come from a middle-class school where children wept in despair at not making the top class, Yolanda's view of the world was almost unbearable, and a school that could give her this much – so little – was worth keeping and working for, no matter what the cost in money or the flaws in practice.

The children come to us in the upper grades firmly fixed in their negative self-images, that is, they think they are dumb. When you talk to them about this feeling, you find a deep chasm exists between their experiences of success and this confirmed faith in their own stupidity. Lucy, having made the leap from nonreader to fourth-grade level in one feverish, compulsive, splendid year, was trying to explain why she had not been able to do so in the seven years of school before this one: "I'm dumb." Lucy had n self-images that one could see. She was warm and loving, she on the street, she could assume leadership in petitioning f field day, she could dance at parties and laugh – oh, how sh the world and at herself! But the schools had given her sever to learn that she was "dumb." She had accepted that terrible with grace and resignation. She had learned what math sh reading. She had listened and looked, learning with her eye books could not tell her. When finally she met, in this scho could give her what *she* needed to make the leap into readin cluded faith and patience – then she could do it: she could, i place, take a chance on being dumb, and take a chance on after all.

But no one had told her that it was the schools that had fai she had assumed the total responsibility for her failure. Becau and a strong *positive* self-image, she could bear that respon knowledge of her failure without being crushed. But there are n not even in middle-class schools. And for most of the child is accompanied by anger, if they're lucky, or by apathetic de taught them that they are dumb, "so *stoopid,*" in the felicito one of our teachers. And we will not share willingly our enorm failure. We will only reinforce it.

To view the education of the children in the ghettos as son way house between the sick family and the sick community is ing defeat. The More Effective Schools have been effective p segments where education was not viewed as an ineffective c of a psychiatric service for profoundly disturbed and malfunctio where the problem was not seen as "What's wrong with them?" wrong with us?"

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But no one had told her that it was the schools that had failed her. Always she had assumed the total responsibility for her failure. Because she had love and a strong *positive* self-image, she could bear that responsibility and the knowledge of her failure without being crushed. But there are not many Lucy's, not even in middle-class schools. And for most of the children, the failure is accompanied by anger, if they're lucky, or by apathetic despair. We have taught them that they are dumb, "so *stoopid,*" in the felicitous intonation of one of our teachers. And we will not share willingly our enormous part in that failure. We will only reinforce it.

To view the education of the children in the ghettos as some kind of halfway house between the sick family and the sick community is to invite crushing defeat. The More Effective Schools have been effective precisely in those segments where education was not viewed as an ineffective custodial branch of a psychiatric service for profoundly disturbed and malfunctioning children – where the problem was not seen as "What's wrong with them?" but as "What's wrong with us?"

Mrs. Gloria Channon was educated at schools in rural New Jersey and at colleges in New York City. She has been an elementary school teacher for eight years, three of them in a middle-class school in Queens which, she writes, "I fled because the MES program promised professional excitement."